



# *via pacis*

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community





# The Wild & Extravagant Dreams of God

Carmen Lampe Zeitler

There is a remarkable house in the heart of Des Moines. It is just around a couple of corners and up a couple streets from the Des Moines Catholic Worker, just above Ascension Street, on 13th Street, right next to Morning Star Baptist Church. Morning



night, whenever it is outside, a glow rises from that house in this season. Nearly every inch of lawn and the front of the house is lit up with the manner of holiday. There are wreaths

candles, Santas and reindeer, a Mrs. Claus, elves, a toy shop, candy canes and snow people; angels, including a rather elegant black angel; lights in the trees, along the roof line, around the windows, spelling out the greetings: "Happy Holidays," "Merry Christmas," "Feliz Navidad." It is wild and extravagant, it is relentless and defiant, it is way too much and just enough.

Now many of us have largely diminished our holiday displays. Mostly we have seen it all as, at best, comic, and at worst, as commercial signs in a holiday season. We have even been disheartened by it. But at this house on this street in this neighborhood, this outrageous display is a cosmic sign of sorts, even heartening.

In the gospel reading for the first Sunday in Advent, a reading that sort of sets the tone for the season, Matthew 13:24-37, it is pretty clear that when it's all said and done, what God is about in the world is cosmic. It begins with:

*But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man' coming in the clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

Those are some cosmic signs: a darkened sun, a moon that ceases to shine, stars falling, heavens shaken. They are supposed to get our attention, and they are. They are signs of the wild and extravagant dreams of God. Hebrews 1:1 says that "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our ancestors through the prophets, in these days he has spoken to us by a Son." And mostly what God was saying to generation after generation, community upon community, person to person was, "Dream my dreams, spend your life living my dreams, become my dreams."

The dreams are everywhere, bold and bright, wild, extravagant, outrageous. From the Advent prophet

Isaiah:

*... bring good news to the oppressed,  
... bind up the brokenhearted,  
... proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners,  
... proclaim a year of favor from the Lord,  
a day of our God's vengeance  
... For I the Lord love justice....*

to the songs of a young mother:

*... the Mighty One has done great things  
for me, and holy is his name.  
... he has scattered the proud  
and their purposes. He has brought down  
the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the poor;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich empty away....*

the dreams are as relentless as the holiday lights at the remarkable house on 13th Street.

Clearly, to take on the dreams of God as one's own, there is some defiance that must come along. To mount an enormous display of light in a neighborhood that many in the city wish would go dark forever is an act of defiance. Next door to the lights on 13th Street is another display of light, another act of defiance. Morning Star Baptist Church is a community of faith that for over 30 years has worked at dreaming and being the dreams of God in the neighborhood. They have defiantly held out light and hope in a place where darkness and despair threaten at every turn. The life of that community, in every season is spent to make real the dreams of God.

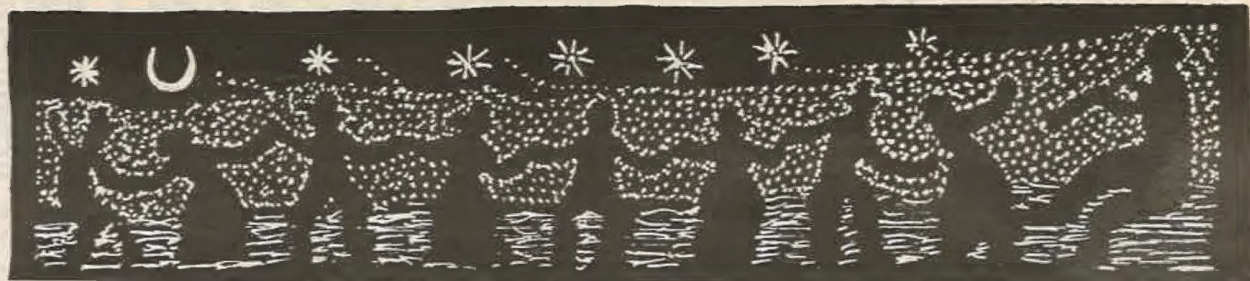
In the season of Advent we are called to remember

that no place is safe from the coming of God's dreams. With any luck at all we will keep awake in the season, wondering where God will next show us, call us to those wild and extravagant, relentless and defiant dreams.

On one Monday during Advent at the Breakfast Club, a place children go before school in the neighborhood, Charlotte was reading a book to Harlie and Mason and Robert. The book was *Countdown to Bethlehem*, a counting book that featured the numbers of cows and sheep and shepherds and such that are a part of the Christmas story. When the story got to the angel choir and their song "Hosanna to God in the highest and on earth peace to all," four-year-old Mason said, "I know that song!" And he began to sing "Oh Susannah."

The story has been told over and over and it always brings a laugh. But could it be that there is something more there than a cute story? Maybe that angel choir song and "Oh Susannah" have something in common. Remember the kind of song that "Oh Susannah" is? "It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry, the sun so hot I froze to death, Susannah don't you cry." It's a nonsense song, On many days and in many seasons the angels' song sounds for all the world like nonsense. "... on earth peace to all." And yet, and yet.... It is the wild, extravagant dream of God, relentless and defiant, way too much and just enough on which to spend our lives, our life together.

[Editor's Note: Besides being a good friend of the DMCW, Carmen coordinates Children and Family Urban Ministries of the United Methodist Church housed at Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines.]



## Building Community Together

Loyal readers of the *via pacis* will recall that we are in the process of renovating our properties. In the last year we've made great progress in this work, but much remains to be done. There are many ways you or your church or service group can help. Of course, we need cash to pay for materials. However, volunteer labor is also necessary to complete this project. Please contact Fr. Frank Cordaro, (515) 243-0765, if you want to help.

Our daily ministry of hospitality also needs your support. You've read in the pages of this newsletter that we open our home to Christ, on our own responsibility. We work for peace and justice, on our own responsibility. We invite you to take on some of this responsibility by making a donation to our work or by volunteering at our house of hospitality.

Together we can join in God's wild and extravagant dream!







*You shall find him wracked by hunger and dying in the Third World.*

## Let Iraq Live

Last year's Advent/Christmas issue of *via pacis* featured an appeal to help end the sanctions against the people of Iraq. Deaths, most tragically of children, continue at an incomprehensible rate. In most cases, the deaths were preventable. The UN/US sanctions harm Iraq's most vulnerable citizens. The sanctions, combined with nearly daily missile attacks from US and UK warplanes, constitutes a crime against humanity and must be ended. Especially during this holy season, when we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, Christians need to be mindful of the suffering and take action to stop it. To find out what you can do end the sanctions, contact: Voices in the Wilderness, 1460 W. Carmen Ave., Chicago, IL 60640. (773) 784-8065.

## The Rich Get Richer . . .

### The Poor Get Poorer



■ More than a billion people in the world subsist on less than a dollar a day. Additionally, nearly three billion live on less than two dollars a day. (Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development)

■ In Honduras, young women make GAP, Inc. (GAP, Old Navy, Banana Republic) clothes and earn 50 cents an hour. Chinese migrants doing this same work in Russia make 11 cents per hour. GAP CEO Millard Drexler makes more than \$24,000 per hour. (Global Exchange)

■ Women in prison in Danbury, CT (a third of whom are from Latin America) work for 23 cents an hour for Unicor factories which produce increments for Trident submarines and other military equipment. (Kathleen Rumpf, recently released from this prison)

■ In Iowa, over 40% of jobs pay less than \$13,666 per year. (National Priorities Project)

■ Pioneer Hi-Bred International CEO Charles Johnson makes \$1,140 per hour; Maytag CEO Leonard Hadley makes \$1,140 per hour; AmerUs Life CEO Roger Brooks makes \$660 per hour. (NPP analysis of Securities and Exchange Commission data.)



**Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat & Witness**  
Dec. 26-28, 1999  
Omaha, NE

*Come and celebrate the full and often ignored meaning of the Christmas story. Come and expose, confront and convert StratCom.*

Contact: Frank Cordaro at the DMCW (515) 243-0765.

\* Thanks to Dorothy Dvorachek for the cover and page one artwork.

## Looking for "Go-Givers"

We are looking for a few good folks — we need some folks to volunteer an hour a week (or more) to assist us with the work of hospitality: sorting donations of food, clothing, and other household items; spending time at the house with our guests; helping with produce giveaway on Saturday mornings. Hey, we'll even provide orientation so you'll know what you're doing.

We can also still use socks, gloves, mittens, hats, and blankets to meet the winter demands. If you're able to help out, call us at 243-0765.

### The Catholic Worker Bookstore



The CW Bookstore, operated by the Peter Maurin Center in Washington, DC, offers more than 35 titles that promote peace, justice, spirituality and the Catholic Worker movement. Call 1-800-437-3223 for a free catalog.

### Des Moines Catholic Worker T-Shirts \$10

**A Real Bargain!**  
Buy one and help support the DMCW.  
Call 243-0765



*peaceful was the night  
when the prince of light  
his reign of peace  
upon the earth began*

Please join us for

**Friday Evening Mass**

**7:30 p.m.**

**Dingman House**

**1310 7th St.**



Celebrate the Eucharist and spend time with friends

## Announcement

Following Mass on Friday, January 14, 2000 Des Moines attorney Fred Gay will give a presentation and facilitate a discussion on the subject of Restorative Justice. The public is invited.

## School of the Americas Action Update

On November 20-21, 1999, several Des Moines residents — including DMCW and extended community members — travelled to Columbus, Georgia. There they joined more than 12,000 other people of conscience in a call to close the School of the Americas (SOA) located at Ft. Benning.

For decades, the SOA has been training soldiers from Latin American and other countries in techniques of torture and tactics designed to intimidate civilians.

On November 21, nearly

4,500 people risked arrest by going onto Ft. Benning property. Like last year, Ft. Benning personnel were overwhelmed by numbers and declined to make mass arrests. So at 5 p.m. all of the protesters walking were bussed off base property. Sixty-five protesters were arrested; 23 of those were charged with court dates.

For more information on the ongoing campaign to close the School of the Americas, contact SOA Watch, PO Box 454, Washington, DC 20017.

## Tour of Solidarity in Guatemala

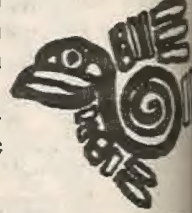
February 2 - 10, 2000

An 8-day excursion to introduce people to mission work in Guatemala to the country and to others currently working in the field.

Richard Flamer has 12 years experience in Central America and has worked with the Archbishop's Committee on Human Rights, Bishop Gerardo Flores in the Diocese of the Verapaz (with refugees), and with the International Forensic team in Northern Guatemala.

Six to eight people can be accommodated flying out of the Midwest for Guatemala City. The city of Antigua will be a base with a trip to the city of Coban and an opportunity to visit the National Park at Biotopo and a camp of repatriated refugees near the town of Raxruha with a return to Guatemala City.

For further information: Call Richard Flamer, Des Moines Catholic Worker at (515) 243-0765.



## via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community  
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Richard Flamer  
Jerry McDermott  
Mike Thompson

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Community members:  
Beth Preheim  
Norman Searah  
Michael Sprong

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1317 8th St.  
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Community Members:  
Ed Bloomer  
The Dawson-Ngamo family: Carla, Richard, Julius, Joshua and Jordan  
Irving Schroeder



# Community NEWS



**Dawson-Ngamo**

Happy Holidays.

There are a lot of holidays to celebrate in December. I hope everyone will have all the blessing they greatly deserve. We have been busy at the Worker. I hear that a real feast on Thanksgiving. I spent Thanksgiving day in Rapid Rapids with my brothers and sisters.

Fr. Kevin, Fr. Dave, Fr. Jack and many of their friends brought a majority of food for our Thanksgiving meal. The preparing of food by these priests has become a tradition, and we are excited by the love and hard work that goes into it.

We at the DMCW are truly grateful for the support we receive from our friends. This year we installed a new furnace (thanks to good folks who prefer to remain anonymous) and doors at the Worker House.

We received a new kitchen refrigerator at Dingman House. We patched the walls and had the plumbing at Ligutti Box 456.

Thanks to a lot of people, we are able to — among other things — serve roughly 9,000 meals this year. Several churches and organizations deserve recognition for their generosity. Some of these groups have been coming to the DMCW for years; others are new to the scene. All of them make our

ministry of hospitality possible.

Thanks to Christ Community Church, especially Fran and Mike Fuller and Kari and Rod Giltner, for their wonderful presence; to Christ the King Church, especially our angel, Rita Hohenshell; to Ron, Carl, Jay, Jane and Ivel, Bev and Pat (who is now warm in Arizona — we miss you) from Indianola for the wonderful cakes and pies; to Norwalk Methodist Church, especially Ron and Katie Routh and Nancy and Craig McDonald, for their homemade everything, for the yogurt and cottage cheese which are a lifesaver to Eddie; to Our Lady of Immaculate Heart Church, not only do they bring dinner, but also the first Sunday of each month their church takes up a canned food collection that allows us to give people groceries and have a stock of food to use at the house; to Sacred Heart Church, especially Fred who always has a joke and a smile; to the folks from St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, who have been a great addition over the past couple of years — Peggy Harris is an inspiration; George Hauck, Roy Robb and last, but not least, Joe Garvey of St. Pius X Church have been bringing supper to the house on a regular basis for longer than anyone else — ham and scalloped potatoes have never tasted so good; to St. Thomas Aquinas Church in

Indianola for the best ham balls ever; to Susan Barnes and friends for the chicken that we only get when you bring it, and for the wonderful fruit and salad; to Faith Lutheran Church for their great help in collecting winter clothes in addition to their great meals.

The following churches and groups delivered financial support or much needed items to the DMCW: Capital City Fruit Company, Summertime Potato Company, St. Francis Church, St. Vincent DePaul Society, Windsor



Heights Lutheran Church, Dowling High School, Ashton Community Church, Dennis and company from Eagle Grove.

We are also blessed with a large extended community, several of whom volunteer on a regular basis. So, a big thank-you to: the Grinnell students who come almost every Saturday, Judy and Bob

Wright, Ron Knight, Miekell Johnson, Lynn Johal, Anchulee Dhugga, Lee Hill, Mary Jo Hostetter, Fred Gay, Erick Davidson, Jackie Robinson, Jean and Bill Basinger, Bob Cook, supportive priests of the Des Moines Catholic Diocese (you know who you are), Helen Oster, Irene Michels, Helen Tichy, Angela Cordaro, Jim Deal, and the rest of the regulars who attend Mass at the DMCW. You are truly community members with us. Without each and everyone of you, things would not go nearly as smoothly. Always know that you are appreciated.

Special thanks to the Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) Food Pantry and Trinity United Methodist Church, located just a few blocks from the DMCW. Trinity is home to Children and Family Urban Ministries of the United Methodist Church. The good folks at Trinity also make their fellowship hall available for our Saturday free food store.

Sr. Sandy and volunteers at the DMARC food pantry work hard to end hunger in Des Moines. The food items we receive from the pantry have provided many a meal here at the Worker.

We would like to thank each and every person who comes to

our house, who sends money and especially the folks who keep us in their prayers that we are truly blessed and grateful. You give true meaning to Christmas throughout the year.

## Community Update

This Fall, Meredith enrolled in a training program to learn carpentry. Except for a minor disagreement with a power saw (don't worry, she's okay after a few stitches), the program has been great for her. And even though Meredith has moved out of Dingman House, she and some other folks are moving into a house just across the alley. Mer remains a part of community life, taking shifts and hanging out at the house.

In the last *vp*, you met Richard Flamer. He came originally to help with building and renovation projects here at the DMCW. I guess we're just too good because Richard joined the community this Fall and will be with us awhile. He plans to guide a peace and justice tour of Guatemala in February.

In November we celebrated the marriage of our good friends Dottie Lynch and Jack Kegel. Dottie lived at the DMCW in the early 80s. We wish them many blessings as they start their new life together in Minneapolis.

The rest of the community is well and enjoying this Advent Season. Stop by some time to meet us and check out the house.

May the Peace of the Season be with you always.

## Norman's Whereabouts

**Norman Searah**

Recently, ago I took Ed Bloomer home to spend some time with his mother and family. On the way back to Des Moines I stayed at a real fancy hotel and remembered how it is to get addicted to things. I watched 80 channels of non-movies on the TV. The commercialized TV system in the hotel also reminded me of how advanced we are in technology. Yet we are still living in the dark or past when it comes to dealing with each other.

We live in the most modern and so-called powerful, first-class nation. Yet we have people living in Third World conditions, and a lot of these people are not only mistreated by our government, but also by other people.

We are moving into a new period of time and with that time comes the tearing down the walls of hate, greed, power, that are sown, passed on and are still being passed on. The hate, greed, and power doesn't just affect us as people, but our environment and

our children's future.

So many people and our environment have been hurt by hate, greed and power. When will we learn to put these things away along with the weapons that were created to support them?

I would like to share about a couple of experiences that helped me learn a little to be what Peter Maurin called a "go giver" instead of a "go getter."

In 1980 or 81 I went to Kentucky with a group of college students from Ames, Iowa. We spent time learning and working with a group of nurses, working with people living in the valleys, in the hollers, and in hills. Our main job was to help winterize houses. The work made us feel good because we were sharing ourselves, and the people who we were helping were sharing themselves. We were all getting something. It was good.

Then, in October of this year, with a lot of help and support, I gathered up a lot of things including a VCR-TV (which I was addicted to), about 10 typewriters, medical supplies, school supplies, window plastic, tools, clothes, blankets, and money.

Thanks to the community

here for use of the house van and to Howard from Iowa Homeless Youth Center, Becky from the Women's Resource Center, and to Richard and Gary. Thanks also to Bishop Charron, Bob Cook, Lawrence Breheny, St. Joseph's Family Shelter, Fr. David Polich, Fr. Thomas DeCarlo and friends, Anna Marie Waltner, Meredith Bruns, Michael Sprong, Beth Preheim, Lee Hill, Bill Basinger, Rita Hohenshell and friends.

On Saturday, the 23rd of October, I took off for Rosebud, South Dakota to team up with Howard and the others. It took awhile, but I got there and found them or they found me. We stayed at a motel overnight.

The next morning, Sunday, we went to Howard's father's home and put plastic on the windows, dropped off tools, clothes, plastic, and a typewriter. Then we went to Allen to give donations to a school that teaches Hoop Dance. Then we went to Martin and had lunch. We went to St. Francis to drop school supplies. There, we gathered sage. We went to Wounded Knee and spent some time there, stopped at KILI Radio near Porcupine to drop the medi-

cal supplies, tapes and a CD of Steve Jacobs (of the Columbia, MO CW).

We got to Pine Ridge and stopped for a snack. There, the battery in the van died. We got a jump-start and went to Red Cloud School, where we visited Red Cloud's grave and dropped off the rest of the school supplies. From there we headed back east to Mission where we found a good motel for me to stay at and a service station where the van was worked on.

The next morning, I ended up buying a new battery and then met my friends at a gift shop where I bought a couple of dream catchers. Then we went to the Rosebud tribal college, Sinte Gleska University. We stopped at the bookstore. There I bought a book, cap, and two pins. Then we went back to Howard father's home.

As we left for home, Howard's father told me that one of the typewriters went to a neighbor's child who liked it very much.

I'm planning on taking another trip soon. I've got some blankets, but could use more. Someday, I would like to take some computers and other items the

people on the reservation tell me they need or would like to have.

I've included one of my favorite "Easy Essays" by Peter Maurin. If you're a music lover, listen to "Pass it on Down" by Alabama. As always, I thank you.

## "Better and Better Off"

The world would be better off if people tried to be better. And people would become better if they stopped trying to become better off. For when everybody tries to become better off, nobody is better off. But when everybody tries to become better, Everybody is better. Everybody would be rich if nobody tried to become richer. And nobody would be poor if everybody tried to be the poorest. And everybody would be what he ought to be if everybody tried to be what he wants the other fellow to be.

— Peter Maurin

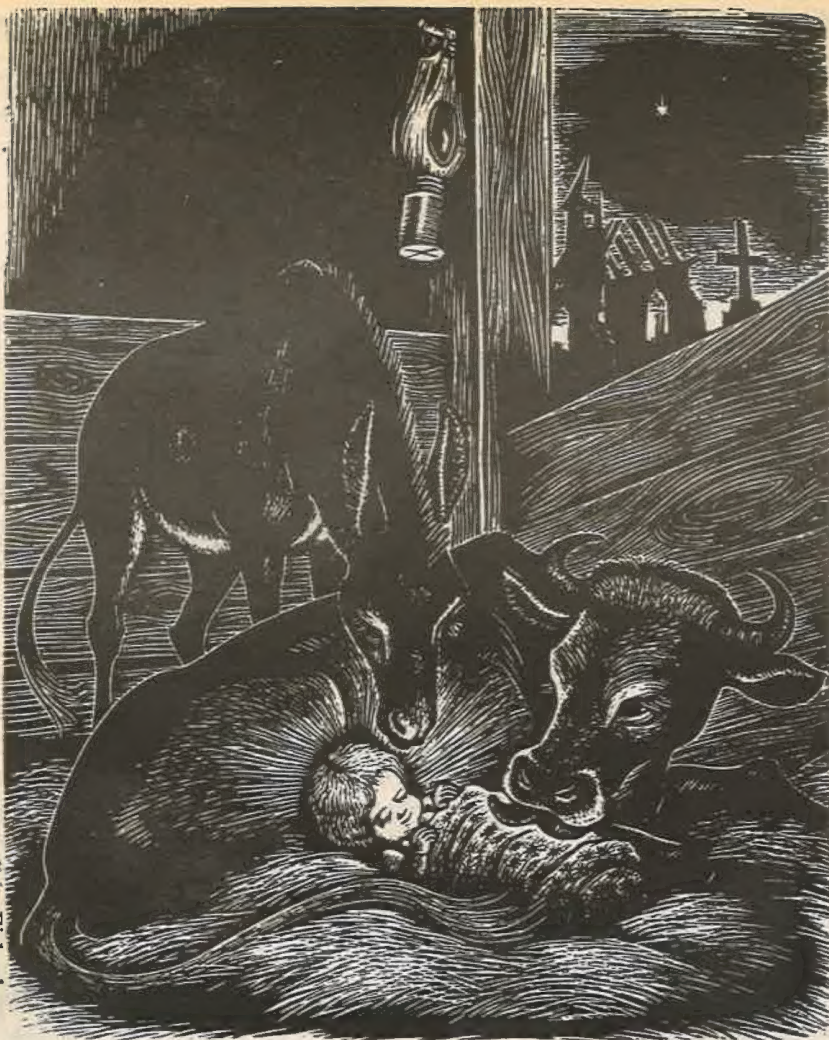




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Fritz Eichenberg

"Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, who are tortured, bombed and exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world."

- Thomas Merton